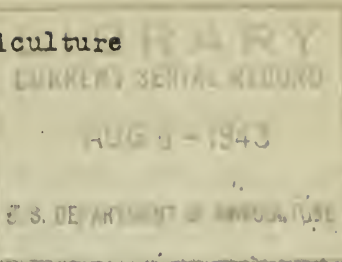


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Subject: Advice for Women and Girls doing Farm Work

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Suggested use: For press and radio releases; speeches.

1. What To Do To Get Into Condition for Farm Work.

As most farm work calls for the use of all muscles, the goal to be sought is top-notch physical condition. If women are to undertake a course of 3 or 4 weeks of training for farm work it would be highly desirable to have along with that training a program of physical conditioning carried out under the supervision of a trained physical education worker. The plan for such a program might well be arranged by a committee of experts in the field. Because women's muscular make-up is quite different from that of men, the vigorous setting-up exercises arranged for men in the military service might well be supplanted by exercises of a different type for women.

Where girls or women go to work on farms with no previous training, the most important thing to keep in mind is that they must start easy. For any but young women in the best of physical condition, a workday of 6 to 7 hours is ample for the first week. The step-up to a full-time day could come perhaps the second week. One of the advantageous facts about most farm work is that the worker will become fatigued and inclined to stop or slow down before actual injury from overwork occurs.

If it is not possible for beginners to have a shorter workday than the others because of transportation or similar complications, they can take longer and more frequent rest periods.

2. How To Use Muscles Correctly When Bending, Lifting, Hoeing, etc.

The chief caution to be observed in weight lifting is to bend the knees and not the back when picking up any heavy article. This enables the strong muscles of the legs and thighs to take the strain of the lifting, whereas bending over and picking up a heavy weight by straightening the back will be extremely likely to cause back strain or serious muscular injury. For the same reason, when hoeing or bending over for weeding, do not assume a round-shouldered or bent-back position. Keep the back straight, bend from the waist; and squat with knees bent, stopping to change position and straighten out now and then.

1/ Information from the Women's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor.

### 3. Lifting Heavy Objects--How Much Weight Can a Woman Lift?

There has been much discussion as to how much weight a woman can safely lift. The average girl or woman in good condition can lift or carry 25 pounds without any difficulty. She can lift 25 to 35 pounds without fear of doing herself injury, provided she lifts the weight in a proper manner. But if she lifts continuously weights of 35 pounds and over she might become tired, and when tired strain or injure herself. Whether a woman can lift over 35 pounds depends on the woman. Many could lift up to 50 pounds without doing themselves harm. Exceptional ones might lift a little more, but any continuous work of lifting weights over 35 pounds without mechanical aid should not be encouraged.

In this matter of weight lifting, consideration should be given to the question whether the work is done for a short period within an hour or two, or whether it is continuous--that is, a continuous repetition of the work. Short periods of such work would be all right. Continuous lifting of such weights would probably be too fatiguing and cause much injury. Weights should not be lifted higher than the level of shoulders or head. Up to that point, the muscles of the legs and thighs help, but above that the strain comes on the back or shoulders and strain or other injury is more likely to result.

A combination of weight lifting and carrying is bad. Thirty-five-pound vegetable crates can be lifted and loaded much more easily than they can be carried a considerable distance. Carrying at the top of capacity is bad, even if two people are sharing the burden, because such an arrangement leaves no reserve for any emergency. Two girls might carry between them a 40-quart milk can which, full would weigh something over 100 pounds. If they do this they are using about all their strength and would have no reserve, and if one should make a misstep or stumble, the extra burden thrown on the other might result in a strain, because she would have no reserve to take care of the extra burden.

There is no question that women have neither the muscular reserve nor the muscular strength of men. Their entire muscular system is a different set-up made for lighter and less exacting work. They should not be pushed to the limit of their strength, nor should they lift or carry too heavy weights.

### 4. Safe Working Habits for Prevention of Accidents.

The most essential safety habits for women who undertake farm work are:

- A. Conserve strength, particularly at first, by getting plenty of sleep and rest. If necessary, go to bed right after supper the first 2 weeks. A tired worker is more likely to have accidents, is more likely to catch cold or catch anything that is going. Your first war job is to conserve your strength and health. Nothing does so much for that as sleep. Do not undertake farm work without a doctor's certificate of physical fitness.
- B. Learn to use your muscles correctly. Do not lift by bending your back and pulling with your arms. Squat down with back straight and pick up weights by straightening your leg and thigh muscles. Do any job you can by squatting and straightening



rather than by bending and straightening. Never try to do anything--stretching, pulling, lifting, etc.--that requires the utmost effort you can put out. That is the time you may do yourself harm. Learn to jump from low elevations, landing lightly on the ball of the foot with knees bent.

- C. Wear suitable clothing. Do not wear shorts and halters. They are unsuitable from every angle. Overalls rolled to knees or cut off at knees; colored long-sleeved shirts (sleeves can be rolled up), shade hat or cap, sweater, raincoat (rubber or oilskin), and rubber boots, are essential for the variety of weather that may be encountered on any farm. Work often must be done in wet or rainy weather. Gloves and dark glasses are often useful, and a bandanna to cover nose and mouth during a very dusty job. When very hot and perspiring, do not cool off by sitting in a breeze. If you stop working under such conditions and cannot get a bath and a rub-down, put on a sweater till you are cool and dry.
- D. Tools and machinery. When you are given a job that requires tools, find out how to use them properly. Always stand hand tools up against something. If they are left lying on the ground someone may step on them and hurt himself. Before you attempt to use any machine, get instructions, and be sure you understand them. Don't try to find out how to operate any machine by experimenting. Never make any adjustments on a machine with the engine running.
- E. Animals must be treated firmly, gently, and quietly to get good results. Never shout or yell at them. Enter a horse's stall on the left side. Harness from the left side and watch out for the horse's heels. Milk cows on the right side. If you are not sure of your courage with loose cows, carry a light stick. Remember a loose cow with a young calf may be resentful of anyone's approach, so keep away from her unless tied up. Never trust any bull.
- F. When going to a new place learn your way around. Remember where stairways are, where you step up or down.

#### 5. What is the Treatment for Sunburn?

Everyone agrees that prevention of sunburn should be sought rather than treatment. Women and girls should be warned not to work, especially for the first few days, with short sleeves, or with too thin shirts, or with jersey shirts cut low in the neck, and not to go without hats even if they "always do" in their ordinary occupations.

Besides such precautions, an application of some of the creams that are also good treatment after burns will prevent the quick burning of the skin before it tans. Standard remedial ointments or 5-percent tannic acid jelly (the last-named stains clothing <sup>2/</sup>) are good preventives. There are on the market many creams and lotions to induce tan and prevent burning, and a list of them is published by the Consumers' Research (July 1942). In general, creams have more base and are more lasting than lotions. A tube of cream can be carried in the pocket easily, a bottle of lotion less easily.

<sup>2/</sup> For methods of removing stains see "Stain Removal From Fabrics: Home Methods," Farmers' Bulletin No. 1474, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture (page 10).

In case of a painful sunburn, tannic-acid jelly (5 percent), which comes in tubes or jars, probably gives as much relief as anything. Its drawback is that it stains clothes and bed linen <sup>2/</sup>. Several standard ointments give relief also and do not stain. A wet dressing of baking soda or Epsom salts (dessert-spoonful in glass of water) is also relieving.

If the skin is blistered it should be kept covered with a sterile dressing over tannic acid jelly or an ointment, or wet dressings (which must not be allowed to dry out and stick to skin). If the burn is extensive or very bad, it would be advisable to see a doctor. If sterile dressings are not available, use clean, freshly ironed old cotton or linen cloths.

Sunstroke and heat exhaustion. Sunstroke may occur among farm workers from overexposure and exertion in the hot sun. The person suffering from sunstroke will probably have a headache, feel nauseated, and will develop a high temperature. Her skin will be hot and dry and her face very red. She should lie down at once in a cool place with her head a little higher than her body, and should be made cool, possibly through the application of cold water or water-soaked cloths to the head and body. Heat exhaustion might occur among farm workers who overexert themselves in intense heat inside, such as in the haymow during haying or in the silo treading ensilage. In these cases the worker will be very pale, perspire excessively, and her pulse may be very weak. She will need to be given stimulants, which is never done in the case of sunstroke, and be kept warm.<sup>3/</sup>

#### 6. How To Care for Blisters, Cuts, Bee Stings, Insect Bites, and Poison Ivy.

Blisters. Prick with a needle that has been dipped in alcohol or held in the flame of a match to sterilize it. Prick on the outer rim of the blister and gently press fluid out. Do not break skin.

If use of the blistered part is likely to break skin, as when blister is in palm of hand, cover with sterile gauze taped on with adhesive. Keep covered till healed.

Cuts. Minor cuts should not be sucked with the mouth or washed in water. This also applies to a scrape. Apply any good disinfectant; 2 percent iodine or mercurchrome are two of the best known, but there are many others. Cover with sterile gauze or sterile bandage and keep covered till healed over.

Bee stings and insect bites. These are often quite painful and mildly poisonous. Do not scratch. If sting can be seen in the bite, pull it out. Applications of alcohol, or water with a little ammonia in it, may relieve stings. Witch hazel or calomine lotion may relieve bites. They will not last long unless they become infected by scratching. Cold applications are relieving. Mosquitoes or flies in a room may be killed by the use of a good insect spray.

Poison ivy. All farm workers should have poison ivy pointed out to them at once by their employers and should be warned of its danger. Hospitalization for a week or more may result from a bad case. Remember that one is much more susceptible when perspiring freely (with open pores), as in haying.

<sup>2/</sup> For methods of removing stains see "Stain Removal From Fabrics: Home Methods," Farmers' Bulletin No. 1474, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture (page 10).

<sup>3/</sup> The cause, symptoms, and treatment are given in greater detail in the American Red Cross First Aid Textbook. See 1940 reprint; p. 188.



If contact with ivy is suspected, bathe exposed parts as soon as possible with rubbing alcohol, using a sopping rather than rubbing motion. Then sop with a solution of one teaspoonful of chlorox in a glass of water (an even stronger solution is sometimes used on thick skins). A 5-percent solution of permanganate of potash is good but leaves dark-brown stains. Calomine lotion may help in mild cases. Remember there is no known cure for poison ivy and the intense itching and swelling can be very distressing. Learn to recognize this three-leaved vine and avoid it. Never burn it. The smoke is fully as poisonous as the leaves or stem and may close the victim's eyes completely. Poison ivy infection appears first as a faint rash; then small blisters develop and itch intensely. Do not scratch. It should be over in 1 or 2 weeks. Remember that prevention is better than cure. If no remedies such as alcohol or chlorox are available, wash exposed parts thoroughly with thick lather of brown soap (do not scrub with brush). It is well worth the few cents it costs to have alcohol, chlorox, and permanganate of potash crystals on hand. Five cents worth of the last named would last months.

#### 7. Amount of Water To Drink and How Much Salt.

Water should be drunk freely, but not ice water. If a jug of water is carried to the field, workers should have their own cups and not drink out of the jug or a common cup. When workers perspire freely, they may use 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoonful of salt to each glass of drinking water to replace salt lost through perspiration. When working in intense heat the addition of a little raw oatmeal to the water makes it more refreshing and invigorating than plain water.

#### 8. Care of the Feet.

The feet should be protected by clean, whole socks and comfortable low-heeled shoes. Workers should not go barefoot around the farm, as there is too much danger of stepping on a rusty nail or bit of machinery, or getting stone bruises. The feet should be bathed every day and nails kept closely trimmed.

#### 9. How To Get the Most Out of a Few Minutes Rest.

It is difficult to say how frequently rest should be taken, because the variety of work on a farm may bring natural breaks in the work, when relaxation and rest will come from change of location, occupation, or position. If the work is continuous and steady, such as hoeing, cultivating, or weeding down very long rows, the amount of rest that should be taken would have to be dictated by the worker's condition. Generally speaking, 10 to 15 minutes in the middle of the morning and the middle of the afternoon is considered a desirable rest period in industry. In continuous farm work, two rest periods a day of 15 minutes each in addition to the lunch period might be plenty.

It is not always possible to set a definite amount of time for rest. When a worker feels so tired that she feels she must stop before going on with the work she should do so. In farm work the muscular fatigue probably will cause a worker to pause for rest before any actual strain from overwork has developed.

The most rest can be obtained from a few minutes' pause in the work by lying flat on one's back, nothing under the head, and drawing the knees up enough to relax the tension of the back. Lying flat on one's back and raising the feet and resting them against a tree or fence or other object is also good. While taking this rest relax as completely as possible.

